

PHYSICAL CHARACTERIZATION

“Be as creative as you wanna be. Go as far as you can go...Change yourself as many ways as you possibly can.”

—Samuel L. Jackson

SUBCHAPTERS

- Use Physical Characteristics to Make Your Character Different
- Think About Dress As an Expression of Character
- Become Proficient in Your Character's Skill
- Change Yourself As Much As You Can

CHAPTER REVIEW

There are two ways actors can use their physicality to reflect their character: their actual physical appearance and the way that they move and carry themselves. Sam advocates that actors be as creative as possible with both elements in order to create a multi-dimensional character.

When creating his character's physicality, Sam considers their body posture as a manifestation of their psychology. If they have a physical condition or infirmity, he researches what those look like. If they have specialized skills, he researches and practices those so that he can perform them with authenticity. Putting this level of preparation into a role connects you to the character more deeply, earns the audience's trust and belief in your performance, and helps them connect to your character.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Screen some of Sam's films and observe how he physically characterizes each performance. Ask yourself, “How does Sam reveal personality with posture? What wardrobe or makeup elements might've helped him?” In this chapter, Sam mentions his roles in:
 - *One Eight Seven*
 - *A Time to Kill*
 - *The Caveman's Valentine*
 - *Shaft*
 - *Unbreakable*
 - *The Red Violin*
 - *Black Snake Moan*
 - *S.W.A.T.*

3.

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ASSIGNMENTS

- In the script you chose, do any of the characters have a specialized skill, or profession? If so, research them. Try finding a classmate who can offer you insight about your character's skills. Practice those skills where possible. Watch films that feature characters with those skills, or professions. Do you think they're portrayed accurately and authentically? Share what you've discovered with your classmates in [The Hub](#).
- Begin developing your chosen character's physicality. There's no limit to what you can bring. Since it's easier to dial back a performance than to add more to one, explore varying levels of extremity. If your character has a limp, how exaggerated is it? What part of their body do they lead with? What kind of shoes do they wear? What kind of clothes do they wear? Both of those choices will also inform your movement. Try all of this on, and experiment to determine what's not enough, what's too much, and what's just right. If you need help, ask your classmates for feedback.

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